

Brighter Futures for Young Carers in Ireland?



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

Presenters:

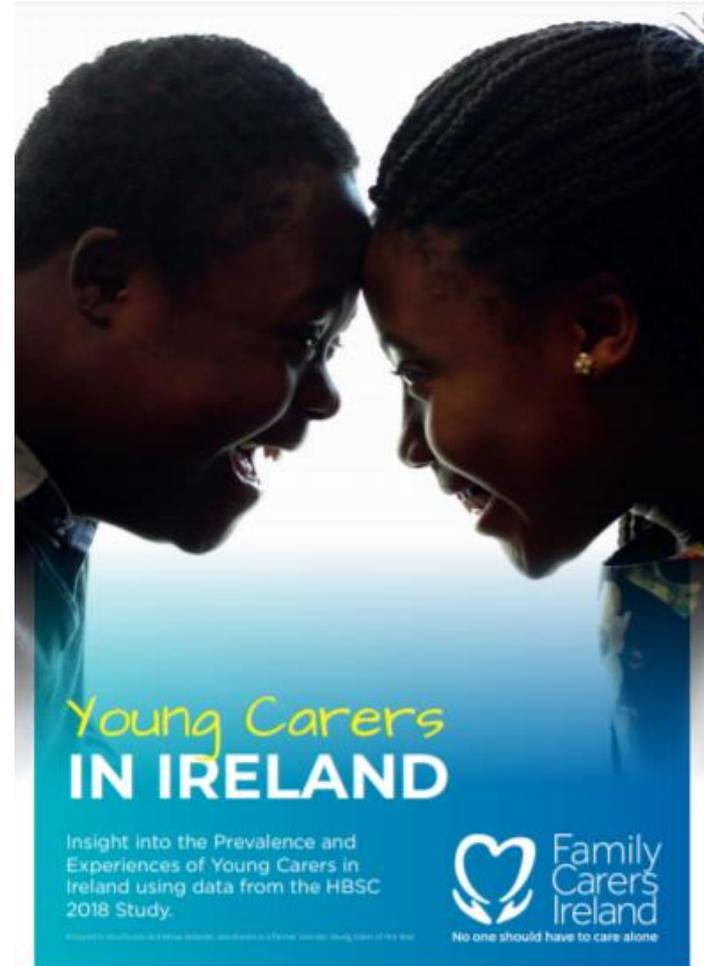
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Overview

- Irish Context: Prevalence & Policy
- Health Behaviour in School-aged Children 2018: Background & Methods
- Findings
- Bringing the findings to life:
Sean Collins, young carer



Irish Context: Prevalance & Policy

- Limited data on young carers in Ireland
- HBSC 2018 survey - carer-oriented policy in Ireland tends to focus on adult family carers
- No national legislation, policy or mainstream supports for young carers in Ireland
- State commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Shauna Tighe is 18yrs old. Her brother Daniel has Sotos Syndrome. She is his big sister *and is a young carer.*

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: Five National Outcomes

NATIONAL OUTCOMES

Active & healthy,
physical & mental
wellbeing

Achieving
full potential
in all areas of
learning &
development

Safe & protected
from harm

Economic security
& opportunity

Connected,
respected &
contributing to
their world

AIMS:

Children and young people are or have ...

1.1

Physically healthy
and make positive
health choices

2.1

Learning
and developing
from birth

3.1

Secure, stable,
caring home
environment

4.1

Protected
from poverty and
social exclusion

5.1

Sense of own
identity, free from
discrimination

1.2

Good
mental health

2.2

Social and
emotional
wellbeing

3.2

Safe from
abuse, neglect
and exploitation

4.2

Living in
child/youth-friendly
sustainable
communities

5.2

Part of
positive networks
of friends, family
and community

1.3

Positive
and respectful
approach to
relationships and
sexual health

2.3

Engaged
in learning

3.3

Protected
from bullying and
discrimination

4.3

Opportunities for
ongoing education
and training

5.3

Civically engaged,
socially and
environmentally
conscious

1.4

Enjoying play,
recreation, sport,
arts, culture
and nature

2.4

Achieving
in education

3.4

Safe from crime
and antisocial
behaviour

4.4

Pathways to
economic
participation and
independent living

5.4

Aware of rights,
responsible and
respectful of
the law

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Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): Background & Methods

Health Behaviour in School Children 2018 Study

- Collaborative study with the WHO European Regional Office.
- Irish study asks children aged 10-17 about their health and wellbeing and health behaviours in different contexts.
- School-based, self-completion survey.
- Participants: 15,557 10-17 year olds from a stratified sample of 255 primary and post-primary schools across Ireland in 2018.
- Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software and Pearsons Chi-square was used to test for significance.

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Outcome 2: Achieving potential in all areas of learning and development

Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are significantly less likely to report that they are happy with the way they are (48.6% compared to 53.4%) $p < 0.01$
- Young carers reported significantly higher scores on the Mental Health Inventory 5 than non-carers ($p < 0.001$), indicating poorer mental health among young carers



Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are less likely to report liking school – 34% answered no when asked if they liked school, compared to 28% of their peers without caring responsibilities ($p < 0.05$)
- Young carers are significantly more likely to report feeling pressured by school work (47.2% compared to 42.9%) $p < 0.01$
- Young carers were significantly more likely to have been bullied (37.5% compared to 28.3%) $p < 0.001$

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Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing

Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Feeling high level of support from peers and having at least one caring adult to confide in were not significantly associated with having a caring role.



Séan Collins is hugely involved in the care of both his sister and his Mum.

Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are significantly more likely to report that they make a positive contribution to the world (27.8% compared to 25.9%)
 $p < 0.05$
- Young carers are significantly more likely to report that they take part in volunteer work (18.1% compared to 13%) $p < 0.05$
- Young carers are significantly more likely to report that they know their rights as a young person (40.4% compared to 37%) $p < 0.05$

Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are significantly less likely to report that they feel valued and respected as a person (56.2% compared to 55.3%) ($p < 0.05$)



What does this mean?

- Joseph et al (2020, 79) raise the point that many studies of young carers adopt a ‘medicalised approach to caring as if it were a pathogen that leads to illness’.
- Range of studies showing caring at a young age can be associated with increasing maturity (Hunt et al, 2005) or qualities of compassion and empathy (Stamatopoulos, 2018)



Conclusion

- Ireland has demonstrated a commitment to children's wellbeing
- However, young carers are doing worse than their peers across a number of areas
- Findings suggest nuances of caring
- Supports developed based on what helps young carers
- More work to be done on dataset



References

- Hunt, G., Levine, C., & Naiditch, L. (2005). Young caregivers in the US: Findings from a national survey. Bethesda, MD: National Alliance for Care Giving and the United Hospital Fund.
- Joseph, S., Sempik, J., Leu, A. *et al.* Young Carers Research, Practice and Policy: An Overview and Critical Perspective on Possible Future Directions. *Adolescent Res Rev* **5**, 77–89 (2020).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-019-00119-9>
- Stamatopoulos, V. (2018). The young carer penalty: Exploring the costs of caregiving among a sample



Sean Collins, Young Carer